DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 402 414 UD 031 438

AUTHOR	Hanson, Sandra L.
TITLE	Lost Talent: Women in the Sciences. Labor and Social Change Series.
SPONS AGENCY	National Science Foundation, Arlington, VA.
REPORT NO	ISBN-1-56639-446-5
PUB DATE	96
CONTRACT	SES-9122802
NOTE	220p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Temple University Press, 1601 Broad Street, Philadelphia, PA 19122-6099 ($39.95).
PUB TYPE	Books (010) -- Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)
EDRS PRICE	Document Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	Academic Achievement; Academic Persistence; Access to Education; *Career Choice; Expectation; *Females; Higher Education; High Schools; High School Students; Mathematics; *Science Careers; *Sex Differences; Stereotypes; Student Attitudes; *Student Interests; *Talent
IDENTIFIERS	High School and Beyond (NCES); Longitudinal Study of American Youth; National Education Longitudinal Study 1988

ABSTRACT

The research reported followed groups of young women from large national samples to begin to understand the complexities that explain the loss of scientifically talented young women from the sciences. The study explores women's experiences in diverse areas of science and presents a picture of the successful woman scientist. Data sets used are the High School and Beyond survey, a longitudinal study of approximately 58,000 high school students, the National Educational Longitudinal Study of 26,200 eight graders, and the Longitudinal Study of American Youth, a study involving 52 high schools and 52 middle schools. Four aspects of experience in mathematics and science are explored: (1) achievement; (2) access; (3) attitudes; and (4) activities. Four sets of causal factors (gender, family resources, school resources, and individual resources) are also considered. Overall, research indicates that gender is an important factor in creating lost talent. Young talented women are more likely to leave the sciences than are young men because of structural barriers and selection processes. Chapters consider science experiences in school and outside. resources, gender and resources, survivors in the sciences, and conclusions about science persistence. An appendix describes measures used and the analysis design. (Contains 22 tables, 4 appendix tables, 20 figures, and 180 references.) (SLD)

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